

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Emus near Perth.**—I saw seven of these birds, on July 18, 1970, 11 miles NNW of Perth. They were approximately two miles due S. of Lake Gngangara. They were seen again on September 16, on newly cleared forestry land just S. of the Gngangara pine plantation.

—BRIAN HUTCHISON, Woodlands

**Cockatiels near Perth.**—Apparently the Cockatiel (*Leptolophus hollandicus*) has not been previously reported in the near vicinity of Perth. Serventy and Whittell (*Birds of Western Australia*, 4th edn., 1967) state they avoid the South-West jarrah block but occasionally penetrate as far as Bridgetown. On March 5, 1970 I saw five Cockatiels in Monash Avenue, Hollywood. They perched on telegraph lines and then flew south. I watched them until they were out of sight. By their nervous behaviour and by the way they flew as a flock I was convinced they were wild birds.

—BRIAN HUTCHISON, Woodlands

**Hovering in the Brown Honeyeater.**—A Brown Honeyeater (*Lichmera indistincta*) observed in my garden at Woodlands has a very deformed left leg and finds it very difficult to perch on the *Grevillea* and *Banksia* flowers from which it is extracting nectar. The bird has overcome the problem by hovering in front of the flowers in the manner of a humming-bird. I have observed the bird actually probe the flowers over which it is hovering. I have never observed this practice before and assume it is a development, or adaptation for survival, induced by its deformity.

—BRIAN HUTCHISON, Woodlands.

**Australian Pratincoles in Southern Western Australia.**—At 7.40 a.m. on 29 January 1971, two Australian Pratincoles (*Stiltia isabella*) were observed on Kanandah Station near the western edge of the Nullarbor Plain. The location (30° 55' S, 124° 45' E) was 30 km. north of Naretha and was in a Myall-Saltbush-Bluebush association which had been grazed by sheep since 1962 and which had just experienced two years of below average rainfall. They were seen walking on a bare area and, when disturbed, they flew off rapidly to the north.

Although this species has been reported on the South Australian section of the Nullarbor Plain (Le Souef, 1921, *Emu*, 21, 1921: 125-128); Serventy, *W. Aust. Nat.*, 6, 1958: 152), this would appear the first recorded sighting from southern Western Australia.

—M. G. BROOKER, Gooseberry Hill.

**Yellow Figbird in Western Australia.**—Among the birds I recently collected for the American Museum of Natural History in the central highlands of the Kimberley Division was a species new for Western Australia. This was the Yellow Figbird (*Sphecotheres flaviventris*), two males and a female taken on Manning Creek, three miles west of Mt. Barnett Homestead (16° 40' S, 125° 55' E), on 28 May 1970.

The birds were feeding on the ripe fruits of a rock-fig believed to be *Ficus nesophila*. Other birds feeding on these figs included the Black-faced and White-breasted Cuckoo-Shrikes, Great Bower-bird, Olive-backed Oriole and Silver-crowned Friarbird.

There is no record of the Yellow Figbird nearer to Manning Creek than at Port Keats, Northern Territory, 280 miles to the north-east.

—W. H. BUTLER, Wanneroo.

**Notes on the Tawny Frogmouth.**—At 2145 hours on February 17, 1970, three miles west of Mundaring Weir, two Tawny Frogmouths, *Podargus strigoides*, were disturbed and flew to a limb of a dead Marri 9 metres from the ground. While in flight one bird called "hoo hoo"; the other a quick series of sharp "ooms." Perched facing the same direction they vigorously preened the head of each other; occasionally preening themselves. Only once did the beak of a bird come into contact with the oil gland. Sometimes a foot was raised for scratching. During preening the birds were in firm bodily contact; a few small feathers were shed; and at least one bird frequently uttered a high pitched squeaking call.

The temperature was 17° Centigrade; the air almost calm; the moon

fairly bright, midway between first quarter and full moon; and there was no cloud cover. The incident followed a fall of 134 points of rain, although none had fallen for 20 hours. The birds preened for slightly more than ten minutes during which they were watched continuously with a head-torch.

—JOHN DELL, Kalamunda

**Irruption of White-winged Black Terns, 1970.**—An irruption of White-winged Black Terns (*Chlidonias leucoptera*) occurred in the Perth metropolitan area between February 7 and 25, 1970. I first noted the birds on February 7 at Jackadder Lake; a flock of 45 were diving for small fish. Several of the terns appeared exhausted and only flew reluctantly when approached. Subsequent observations revealed that the terns spent most of the mornings feeding over nearby vacant land, feeding on grasshoppers. One bird was seen to capture and consume a large skink. During the afternoon the terns returned to the lake.

Observations sent to me by Messrs. T. Spence, R. H. Stranger, M. Ellis and Dr. D. L. Serventy revealed that the terns were seen at the following localities:

Riverton Bridge, 9 birds  
Lake Yanchep, 100+ birds  
Bibra Lake, 11 birds  
Lake Richmond, 2 birds  
Mongers Lake, 70+ birds  
Jackadder Lake, 45 birds

The terns had all disappeared by February 25. Undoubtedly this irruption was associated with Cyclone Glynis which had moved down the Western Australian coast during the week prior to February 11.

—BRIAN HUTCHISON, Woodlands

**Records of the Spotted Bower-bird in the Murchison District.**—Serventy and Whittell (*Birds of Western Australia*, 4th. edn., 1967, p. 419) give the south-western limits of the range of occurrence of the Spotted Bower-bird (*Chlamydera maculata*) as the middle reaches of the Gascoyne River, Meekatharra and Malcolm. I now present evidence extending the bird's occurrence somewhat to the south of these limits.

During a holiday trip with the family to the Cue district in August 1969 we went out to Poona, 40 miles N.W. of Cue and south of the Weld Range. While at lunch near a dry watercourse, east of the airstrip by Finn Ryan's camp, my wife and I saw a bird fly into a low branch of a mulga. I did not have time to get my binoculars but I am sure that it was a Spotted Bower-bird. I doubt if any other bird, likely to be seen, would be so markedly spotted. I was not able to detect the nuchal collar before the bird flew off, as it was partly obscured by foliage. I noticed a small native fig, *Ficus platypoda*, near the watercourse. Serventy and Whittell believe that distribution of the bower-bird is largely determined by that of the wild fig.

I mentioned the observation to a correspondent, Mr W. M. Jones of Cue, who wrote in reply: "With reference to the bower-bird you mentioned about. If I remember right there are some out at Tuckabiana way but just casually we called them Mimic Birds in years gone by. There are several heaps of stones out there comprising about 1 cwt. of small stones, and these are supposed to be their playgrounds, according to what I have heard." Mr Jones added that he often went out of the camp to look for a cat or dog, induced to do so by the calls, but only saw the "Mimic Birds." Tuckabiana is 15 miles E.S.E. of Cue.

—DAVID HUTCHISON, Wembley Downs

**Possible Sighting of European Curlew at Point Peron.**—The inclusion of the European Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) on the Australian bird list is based solely on sight observations at Nightcliff, in the Darwin area, in March and April, 1948, by the American ornithologist, Herbert D. Deignan (*Records of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land*, 4, 1964 : 369). I now report a very probable occurrence of the species at Point Peron.